

(1796), mentioned in Study VII (Jnl. 45, 372). He probably knew them when all three were serving in Indian waters. We may be certain that Captain Elphinstone knew also an old colleague in the Indian naval service, J. F. Hodgetts (1828-1906), who in 1851 became Professor of Seamanship to Prussian Naval Cadets at Berlin, a post he held till 1866. HS spent several months in Berlin in the summer of 1860, and may well have gone there with a letter of introduction to Professor Hodgetts from Captain Elphinstone. For the Hodgetts see D.N.B. 2nd Suppl. ii, s.n. J. F. Hodgetts (1828-1906) and his son E. A. B. Hodgetts, born in Berlin in 1859.

Hodgetts was a very rare name in England at the time, and its occurrence in a script about an incident in a German-speaking country compels the conclusion that we are here dealing with a memory of an event which took place during the period when Professor Hodgetts was at Berlin. There is, of course, the possibility that the memory source from which the names were obtained was that of Howard (later Sir Howard) Elphinstone, who doubtless knew all about HS' visit to Dresden in 1859, and his contacts there and lived until 1917. As to that hypothesis I shall have some more to say in a later study.

(to be continued)

OBITUARY

DR R. G. MEDHURST 1920-1971

The death of George Medhurst is not only a tragedy for himself, his family and his friends, but also a great loss to psychical research, to which he had devoted so much time, thought and meticulously detailed work. A member of the Council since 1962, his wide knowledge of the history of Spiritualism was balanced by his *expertise* in conducting experiments requiring statistical assessment.

Richard George Medhurst was born on 29 April 1920. His family was poor, his childhood was overshadowed by his father's ill health and unemployment, and his education was achieved by winning a series of scholarships. In 1942 he took a degree in mathematics at Queen Mary College, London (during its war-time sojourn in Cambridge). His interest in psychical research stimulated by the knowledge that Dr S. G. Soal, whose lectures

he attended, was currently carrying out experiments in telepathy took him to observe the proceedings of various spiritualist churches. After his Finals, he was taken on by Dr Soal to assist in a short series of further tests with Shackleton, and given full responsibility for checking the score-sheets. He always felt that the change in scoring pattern from + 1 or - 1 hits to + 2 or - 2 hits when the targets were presented at double the usual rate in these tests was virtually conclusive evidence in favour of ESP, though falling short of absolute proof.

Despite his lifelong interest in paranormal cognition he spoke of only two personal experiences that might fit into this category. Once while driving up the hill to his house he was struck with the thought that it would be curious thing to find, when he drove round the corner, that a strange car was parked in his driveway; and a strange car was there, for the first and only time in ten years. He very correctly discounted this odd event on the grounds that he might possibly have invented a pseudo-memory on seeing the car in the drive; a similar phenomenon that pleased him inordinately was when he found a copy of Edward Cox's 'Mechanism of Man' tucked away in the back room of a small bookshop in a holiday town in Wales. While browsing in the front of the shop he was forcibly struck with the thought that it would be nice (and rather fantastic) if he were to find this particular book in the back room; and he did.

Books were, in fact, his passion, and he had a remarkable library, lovingly collected over the years, of volumes dealing directly or incidentally with psychological research.

His mathematical engineering work (largely on aerials theory and distortion problems in communications) at the General Electric Company was creative and demanding; he twice won the Heaviside Premium awarded by the Institute of Electrical Engineers for the best mathematical paper of the year, and shortly before his death he was awarded the London University doctorate of science degree in engineering. Yet once office hours were over he would usually spend a further three or four hours a day hard at work on psychical research, and over the last 10 years he was largely responsible for conducting and following up a mass ESP experiment, writing (with Mrs K. M. Goldney) the memorable Proceedings paper on Sir William Crookes, discovering and editing a series of unpublished sittings* taken from the notebooks of W. Stainton Moses and for a great deal of SPR Committee work.

He was Chairman of the Library Committee, participated in

* LIGHT, Spring 1963 to Spring 1967.

many test sessions undertaken by the ESP Committee, and carried out a long series of tests with a hypnotized subject on behalf of the Hypnosis Committee. He also undertook much individual investigation. Thus, having found a clue as to the identity and location of Harry Price's 'Rosalie' circle, he inspected over 100 houses all over Greater London to see whether they corresponded with Price's description. One of his most gruelling investigations was an attempt to use a propounded statistical test to establish the 'authorship' of mediumistic scripts. It involved setting out the distribution of sentence lengths in some 70 columns, totalling each one, converting to logarithmic values, and then subjecting each value to complicated mathematical procedures. If one count of a column showed 45 sentences, and another showed 44, most mere mortals would have entered one of these numbers as correct, or correct enough; but however near midnight, he would always insist on a re-count, because it had to be exactly right. With all this, from 1963 until his illness began he found time to attend a weekly 'home circle.'

Experienced in assessing theses and other original contributions to the subject of mathematical engineering, he used the critical faculty trained in this way to examine studies of psychical research, and wrote for the *Journal* a number of informed and authoritative reviews. His factual and well argued discussions of Mr T. H. Hall's *New Light on Old Ghosts* and of Professor Hansel's *E.S.P. : a Scientific Evaluation* were especially useful.

In September 1969, at the height of his intellectual powers, he underwent an operation for the removal of a malignant brain tumour. The trouble recurred a year later, but he continued work in psychical research until, just before Christmas 1970, his sight was affected. He collaborated on an article for *Man, Myth and Magic*, carried on a lengthy correspondence in an attempt to finalise a much delayed criticism of the Pratt/Woodruffe experiment, investigated and wrote a report on an apparent case of divining, and finished the paper published in the *Journal* for March 1971 on the random number sequences used in the Soal-Shackleton experiments, a paper whose conclusions, much to his distress, differed radically from the assumption which had originally led him to write it. More happily, his last contribution to psychical research was to begin selecting items from his carefully amassed collection of material connected with Sir William Crookes whom he much admired. This is for a volume presently to be brought out by the Souvenir Press.

M. R. BARRINGTON